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2 Claims

3 1. Apparatus for authenticating an entity in a shared
4 hosting computer network environment, said apparatus comprising:
5 a service provider computer containing a plurality of
6 entity sites;

7 connected to the service provider computer, a trusted
8 third party computer adapted to provide a conglomerated
9 authenticity certification to the service provider computer; and

10 coupled to the trusted third party computer, converting
11 means for enabling an entity to seek to convert the conglomerated
12 authenticity certification into an individualized authenticity
13 certification covering that entity's site. . .

14 2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the converting means
15 comprises a plurality of conversion tokens pre-purchased from the
16 trusted third party by the service provider.

17 3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one entity's
18 site has received an individualized authenticity certification;

19 at least one client computer is connected to said
20 authenticated entity site over the computer network; and

21 a seal evidencing the entity site's authentication is
22 displayed on the client computer.

23 4. The apparatus of claim 3, wherein clicking on the seal
24 results in authentication information being displayed on the
25 client computer.

26 5. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one entity's
27 site has received an individualized authenticity certification;
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2 at least one client computer is connected to said
3 authenticated entity site over the computer network; and

4 the client computer downloads from the trusted third
5 party computer a plug-in module, said plug-in module containing
6 evidence of the individualized authenticity certification.

7 6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein activation of the
8 plug-in module results in authentication information being
9 displayed on the client computer.

10 7. A method by which a trusted third party empowers a
11 service provider to offer to entities having sites hosted on said
12 service provider's computer an ability to seek from the trusted
13 third party individualized authenticity certifications covering
14 said entities' sites, said method comprising the steps of:

15 the trusted third party providing the service provider
16 with a conglomerated authenticity certification; and

17 the service provider making available to the entities a
18 conversion means by which the entities may seek individualized
19 authenticity certifications from the trusted third party.

20 8. The method of claim 7, wherein the conversion means
21 comprises a plurality of digital tokens pre-purchased from the
22 trusted third party by the service provider.

23 9. The method of claim 8, wherein the service provider
24 sends a token, an activation code, and an address of the trusted
25 third party's computer to an entity wishing to obtain an
26 individualized authenticity certification.

27 10. In a computer network in which a service provider
28 computer hosts a plurality of entities, a method by which an

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2 entity desiring authentication applies for an individualized
3 authenticity certification from a trusted third party, said
4 method comprising the steps of:

5 the trusted third party providing a conglomerated
6 authenticity certification to the service provider computer;

7 the service provider computer making available to the
8 desirous entity an activation tool; and

9 the desirous entity presenting the activation tool to
10 the trusted third party, thereby petitioning the trusted third
11 party to convert the conglomerated authenticity certification
12 into an individualized authenticity certification.

13 11. The method of claim 10, wherein the activation tool
14 comprises a digital token that has been pre-purchased from the
15 trusted third party by the service provider.

16 12. The method of claim 10, wherein the activation tool
17 comprises a digital activation code.

18 13. The method of claim 10, wherein the activation tool is
19 appended to a URL of a computer associated with the trusted third
20 party.

21 14. The method of claim 10, wherein the desirous entity
22 presents its domain name to the trusted third party.

23 15. The method of claim 14, wherein the trusted third party
24 uses the domain name to access a WHOIS database.

25 16. The method of claim 10, wherein the trusted third party
26 accesses a proof of right database based upon information
27 provided by the desirous entity.
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2 17. The method of claim 16, wherein, when the desirous
3 entity is deemed acceptable according to the proof of right
4 database, the trusted third party issues an individualized
5 authenticity certification to the desirous entity.

6 18. The method of claim 17, wherein the activation tool is
7 a digital token, and the trusted third party decrements a token
8 counter.

9 19. The method of claim 17, wherein the individualized
10 authenticity certification is evidenced by a seal.

11 20. The method of claim 19, wherein a user computer
12 accesses a Website of the authenticated entity, the seal is
13 downloaded onto the user computer, and the seal is displayed on
14 the user computer.

15 21. The method of claim 20, wherein clicking on the seal on
16 the user computer causes an information page to be displayed on
17 the user computer, said information page containing background
18 information concerning the individualized authenticity
19 certification.

20 22. The method of claim 17, wherein the individualized
21 authenticity certification is evidenced by a plug-in module.

22 23. The method of claim 22, wherein a user computer
23 accesses a Website associated with the trusted third party, the
24 plug-in module is downloaded onto the user computer, and a
25 representation of the plug-in module is displayed on the user
26 computer.

27 24. The method of claim 23, wherein activation of the plug-
28 in module on the user computer causes an information page to be

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2 displayed on the user computer, said information page containing
3 background information concerning the individualized authenticity
4 certification.

5 25. A computer readable medium containing a computer
6 program by which a trusted third party empowers a service
7 provider to offer to entities having sites hosted on said service
8 provider's computer an ability to obtain from the trusted third
9 party individualized authenticity certifications covering said
10 entities' sites, said computer program containing instructions
11 for:

12 enabling the trusted third party to provide the service
13 provider with a conglomerated authenticity certification; and

14 enabling the service provider to make available to the
15 entities a conversion means by which the entities may seek
16 individualized authenticity certifications from the trusted third
17 party.

18 26. A computer readable medium containing a computer
19 program by which an entity having a site hosted on a service
20 provider computer that hosts a plurality of entities' sites can
21 seek authentication from a trusted third party, said computer
22 program containing instructions for:

23 enabling the trusted third party to provide a
24 conglomerated authenticity certification to the service provider
25 computer;

26 enabling the service provider computer to make
27 available to the seeking entity an activation tool; and
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enabling the seeking entity to present the activation
tool to the trusted third party, thereby petitioning the trusted
third party to convert the conglomerated authenticity
certification into an individualized authenticity certification.